

# TRAVEL DISRUPTION

For many part of the thrill of a holiday is getting to the airport and boarding a flight to their chosen holiday destination. Sadly, for some this has turned into a nightmare as flights are delayed or cancelled.

This factsheet is intended to help when things go wrong and provide information on what to do next.

## What are my rights if my flight is delayed?

If the flight was due to leave or arrive in the UK or EU and was with a UK or EU airline, you may be entitled to the following:

### Length of Delay and Compensation (Arrival Delay Over 3 Hours)

#### Flight Distance

Less Than 1,500km	£220
Between 1,500km and 3,500km	£350
More Than 3,500km	£520

You can check the distance of your flight journey [here](#).

## Right to Care

The 'Right to Care' means that the airline must provide:

- Meals and refreshments (typically via vouchers)
- Access to phone calls and emails
- Hotel accommodation if you must stay overnight
- Transport to and from the accommodation

If you are required to buy your own refreshments or accommodation, keep all receipts for a future claim. Airlines only need to cover reasonable expenses—premium food, alcohol, or luxury hotels may not be reimbursed.

You qualify for compensation based on the arrival delay at your final destination—not the departure delay.

## What if the delay is more than five hours?

Where a flight is delayed for more than five hours, you have the option not to board and obtain a full refund for your ticket, including any onward or return flights on the same booking.

## What can I do if my flight is cancelled?

If your flight is cancelled, you have the right to:

- A replacement flight to your destination
- A full refund, including any onward or return flights on the same booking

If you are part-way through your journey and don't want a replacement flight, the airline must offer a flight back to your original departure airport. These rights apply regardless of when the flight was cancelled.

## How much compensation can I claim for a cancelled flight?

To qualify:

- The flight must be cancelled less than 14 days before departure
- It must be operated by a UK or EU airline
- It must be flying to or from a UK or EU airport

To work out your compensation you can check your flight distance [here](#).

For any delays of a rescheduled flight you can use the above information to claim for meals and refreshments and the same criteria will apply.

Compensation for a cancellation and no replacement options, the level of compensation will be as follows:

## Compensation

### Cancellation with rescheduled flight

Flight Distance	Delay (vs. original)	Compensation
< 1,500km	2+ hours late	£220
1,500–3,500km	3+ hours late	£350
> 3,500km	4+ hours late	£520

If your replacement flight arrives earlier, or within the time limits above, compensation may be reduced to £110–£260 depending on the flight distance.

### What if the flight was cancelled less than 7 days before departure?

You may still claim the same levels of compensation, as long as:

- You departed at least 2 hours earlier than booked AND
- You arrived at least 2–4 hours later than booked (depending on distance)

Check your eligibility using the same compensation scale as above.

### How do I claim compensation?

You must submit your claim directly with the airline operating your flight, even if you booked through a different airline or travel agent. Do not use third-party claims companies as they may charge fees.

Check the airline's website for details on how to submit a claim. Provide:

- Flight number
- Dates and times
- Description of delay or cancellation
- Receipts for any costs claimed

### I have tried to make a claim, but I am told there are extraordinary circumstances, what does this mean?

Airlines can reject claims if the disruption was caused by:

- Extreme weather
- Security risks or terrorism
- Political instability
- Airport or air traffic control strikes

However, technical faults, staff shortages, or routine delays do not usually count as extraordinary and should still be eligible for compensation.

If you're unhappy with the airline's response:

- Escalate your complaint to their Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) scheme  
See which airlines participate here: [CAA ADR Information](#)
- If they are not part of an ADR, contact the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA)

### I have a package holiday and my flight has been cancelled; what can I do?

If the flight is part of a package holiday, the tour operator must:

- Offer a suitable replacement, or
- Provide a full refund

To qualify, the holiday must include at least two of:

- Transport (flights, trains, etc.)
- Accommodation (hotel, apartment)
- Car rental
- Tourist service (e.g., tour guide)

Make your claim with the tour operator. If unresolved, contact ABTA or AITO. Note: This factsheet does not include all rights you may have under travel insurance or Section 75 of the Consumer Credit Act 1974. For tailored advice, contact a solicitor or the Citizens Advice consumer helpline.

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